



MAYOR'S OFFICE OF RECOVERY SERVICES

FY 21 REPORT

OCT 2021 // CITY OF BOSTON

About Us

The Mayor's Office of Recovery Services, created in 2015 by former Mayor Martin J. Walsh, is the first municipal office dedicated to substance use in the United States. We serve the large community of Boston residents touched by substance use disorders, including those who are on a recovery journey themselves, their friends, family, providers and community members. Throughout this work, equity is a guiding principle - to ensure all Boston residents have the resources they need to access care and recovery.

We offer a comprehensive set of programs and resources and aim to fill critical gaps in the current system. Recovery Services is a leader in providing prevention and support for youth and families, harm reduction services, connecting people to treatment, and offers outpatient care and long-term peer support. To do this, we work across all City departments, local organizations and with state and federal partners.

Our Philosophy

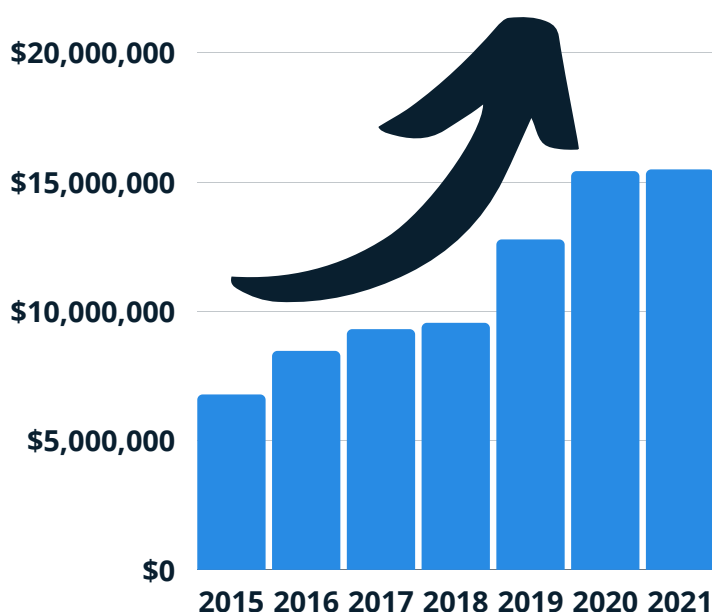
The Office of Recovery Services (ORS) utilizes a highly localized, collaborative approach to address substance use and substance use disorders in Boston's neighborhoods. We aim to advance equitable and comprehensive substance use recovery by:

- **Connecting** people, ideas, and resources to increase access to care.
- **Serving** as a fully engaged partner and leader of new strategies.
- **Innovating** a culture of recovery to ensure health, wellness, and quality of life for Bostonians.

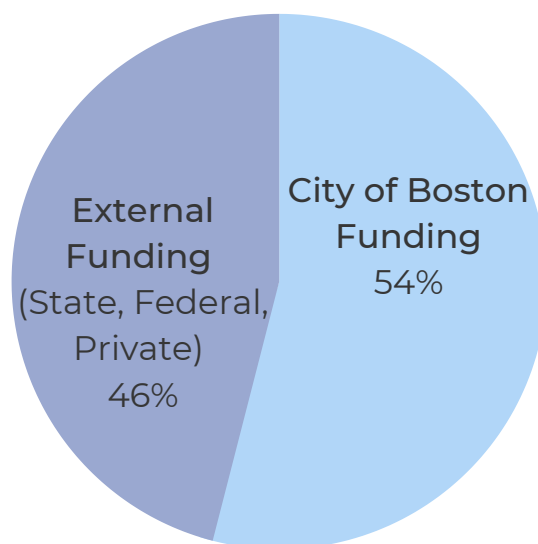
Increasing Resources

Financial Report

Through the support of the City of Boston, State and Federal grants, and private partnerships, the Office of Recovery Services continues to grow its funding, advocating for expanding access to care and resources for the City's most vulnerable residents. FY 21 marks a 233 % increase in funding since the opening of the office in 2015. For FY 21, funding to provide critical care and services exceeded 15 million dollars.



Budget Growth over Time



FY 21 Budget

Funding Success

In FY 21, Massachusetts Department of Public Health released funding that expands drop-in day time spaces for people with SUDs, modeled after the City's Engagement Center (EC). Along with Boston's EC, the funding was awarded to 8 other cities outside of Boston, expanding access to crucial services.

Additionally, the City received first-of-its-kind funding from MDPH to provide essential housing-first services for at-risk populations. Based on Boston's success, this funding has been extended to 4 other cities and towns.

The Last Year

Over the past year, Recovery Services has been tasked with combatting COVID-19, on top of the unrelenting opioid epidemic. While many services across the state remained closed, ORS continued to serve Boston's most vulnerable, moving services completely outside to accommodate the CDC guidelines. Below you will find a snapshot of the success of the City's Drug User Health Program (AHOPE). Throughout this document, you will see a snapshot of the work accomplished in Fiscal Year (FY) 21.

While the City moves towards reopening and creating a new normal post COVID, we must acknowledge the shifts and long-lasting impacts that this pandemic will have on our society, and the way in which care is both given and received. The pandemic has brought many lessons, and ORS plans to use these learnings to continue to serve Boston's most vulnerable.



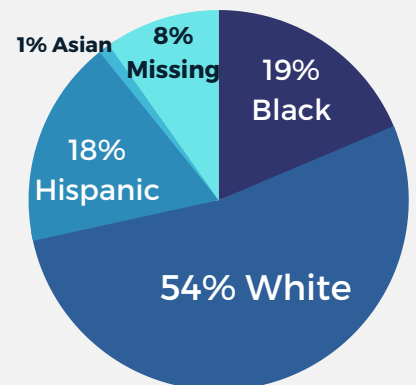
Served **19,550** individuals, for a total of **50,742** interactions.



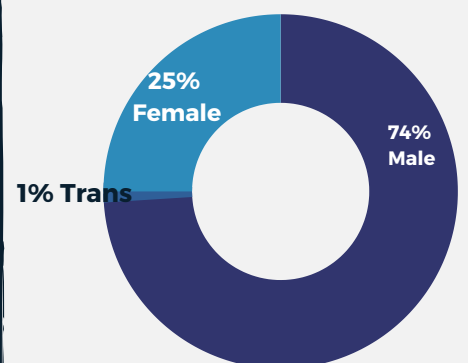
31,000
doses of
Narcan
distributed



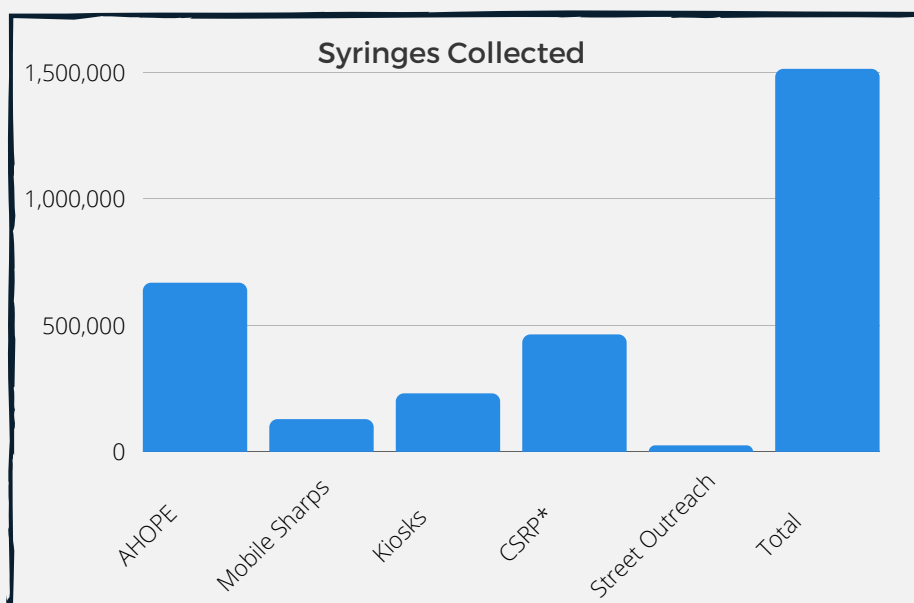
512
HIV/HCV/STI
tests
completed



Race/Ethnicity of Participants



Gender Identity of Participants



Impacts to Substance Use

The co-occurring opioid epidemic and COVID-19 pandemic caused a disruption to healthcare, social services, and the public health and justice systems, which has had a devastating impact on Boston's most vulnerable residents. The mental and emotional impacts of COVID exacerbated the already staggering overdose rates due to the increase in substance use as a means to cope with extreme levels of social isolation, socioeconomic hardships, and disconnect from services.

This past year, the United States had the highest rates of overdose deaths on record, surpassing 93,000 individuals. Massachusetts observed a 5% increase in opioid-related overdoses, the first increase in annual opioid-related deaths in three years. Boston's 245 individuals lost made up 12% of the State's overall overdose rate for 2020. Black residents saw a 70% increase, reflecting the disproportionate toll of the pandemic in communities of color.

Not only has COVID impacted the needs of individuals who use drugs, but it has also impacted the drug supply. Fentanyl remains the key factor in overdoses reported, present in 92% of fatal overdose related toxicology screens in Massachusetts in 2020.

To respond to the increase in overdoses and increase in use of fentanyl and stimulants, the City needed to be nimble in responding to new gaps in the continuum of care. Both on the street and in our programs, we quickly realized that individuals were struggling to access services such as treatment, housing, medical care and mental health services, all exacerbated by the pandemic.

To meet the needs of people who use drugs in Boston, ORS pioneered new ways to deliver care on the street, at the Engagement Center, and through community partnerships.

Adapting Low-Threshold Services

A Wealth of Expertise

In FY 21, ORS created the first ever multidisciplinary street team, increasing the level of wrap-around care people living on the street with substance use disorders are able to access from the street.

First, new services were integrated into the Recovery Services Street Outreach Team to respond to the complex needs of individuals experiencing homelessness who have a substance use disorder. The Recovery Services Street Outreach Team has partnered with community organizations to add street psychiatric support and housing navigation to the team. Adding these crucial services helps meet individuals living on the street where they are, reducing obstacles individuals may face when trying to access care in traditional settings.

Street Team Success



Engaged over **21,500** individuals



6000
Medical
Referrals



200
SUD Treatment
Referrals



700
doses of Narcan
distributed



300
Transports
to Care

Second, the partnership with Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP) was expanded to increase the role of the BHCHP addiction and HIV nursing team, based out of the Engagement Center.

This robust nursing team reaches the most at risk population, providing acute medical responses such as overdose response, care for wounds and weather-related injuries, medication management, HIV/STI testing and follow-up care, and management of other acute and chronic medical illnesses all at the street level.

The Engagement Center

The Engagement Center, opened in August 2017, has been a critical refuge for unsheltered individuals with substance use disorder in the City. The EC, started from a tent, will open a permanent, new building in Fall 2021, providing state of the art space to serve the City's most vulnerable.

When guests enter the Engagement Center they gain access to:

- Management of Acute Medical Issues
- Case Management
- Addiction Treatment
- Overdose Prevention
- HIV Prevention and Treatment
- Basic Needs (Food, water, etc.)



While these services have remained stable, COVID presented a challenge for the majority of individuals being served as most other services were significantly decreased or stopped altogether.

To manage the new level of care needed, the EC took crucial steps by:

- Opening the Comfort Station
- Increasing nursing coverage to respond to acute medical needs
- Adding case management
- Increasing HIV prevention and treatment efforts
- Increasing overdose awareness efforts

The Comfort Station

Due to COVID-19, the closures of daytime services, public buildings, and businesses reduced the number of places where unsheltered people could spend time, use the restroom, and wash their hands during the day.

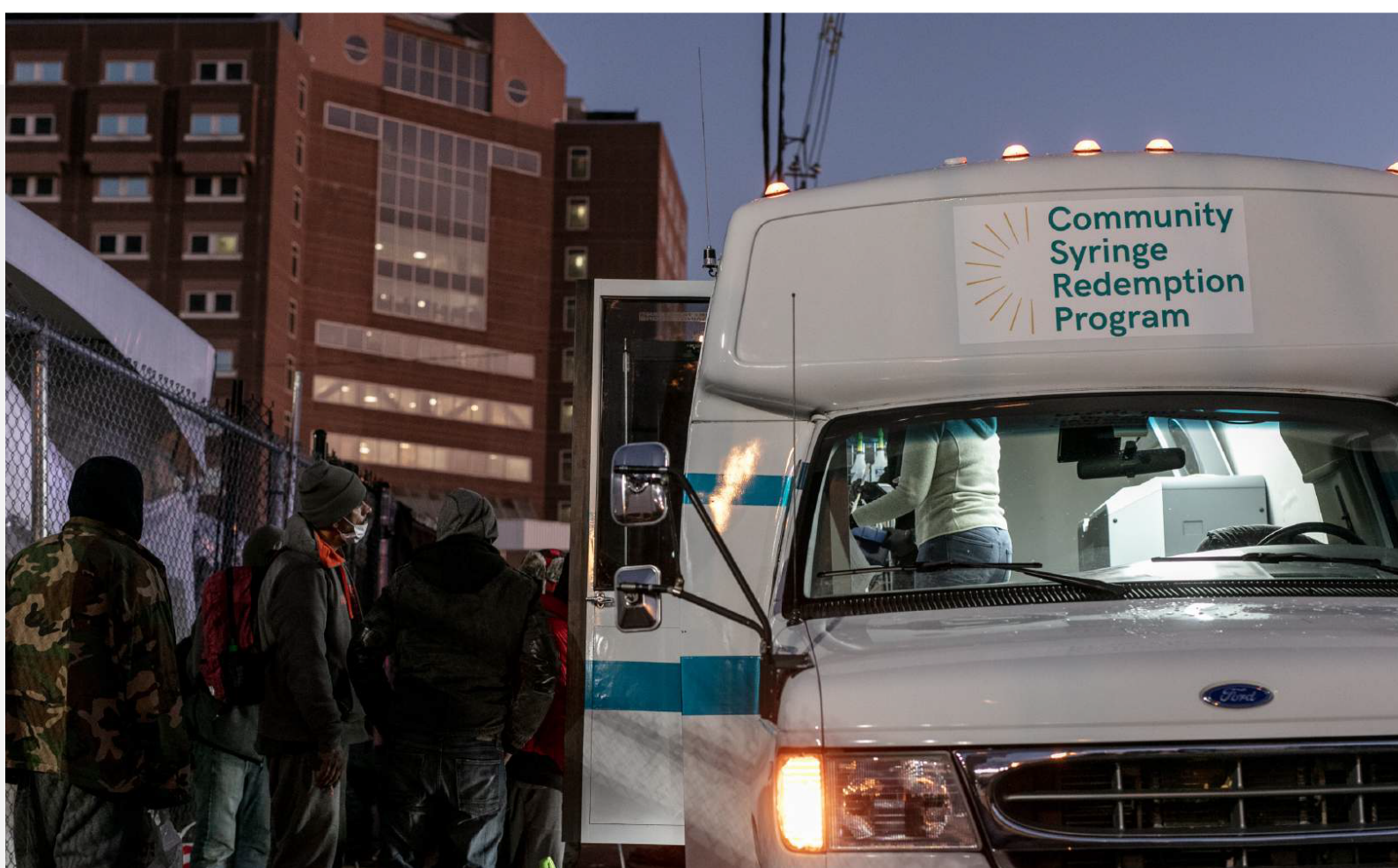
To respond to the growing need for bathroom access, the City opened "Comfort Stations" in different areas.

The Comfort Station was an outdoor space that provided access to bathrooms, hand washing stations, masks, harm reduction supplies, and nursing care.

This resource was a collaborative effort between City departments and community partners that addressed neighborhood and public safety concerns regarding sidewalk congestion by providing a public space away from traffic.



Community Syringe Redemption Program



The Community Syringe Redemption Program (CSRP) is a first-of-its-kind program that reduces the amount of improperly discarded syringes by offering an incentive to enrolled participants to return syringes. The program also provides a low threshold income earning opportunity, increases engagement and job readiness skills.

The CSRP, launched in FY 21, is an innovative solution that improves quality of life, reduces public safety concerns, and reduces 311 service requests and city biohazard waste costs related to syringes. To date, the CSRP has collected over 500,000 syringes, and now operates in 3 locations around the City.

Better Connections to Care

Finding New Ways to Provide



The [Nubian Square Neighborhood Engagement Team](#), launched in June 2021, works to connect with community members, businesses, and the City to create a more coordinated approach to dealing with the unique challenges of the Nubian Square area. This team develops relationships with individuals spending time on the street during the day. The team provides consistent communication with residents and businesses, addressing needs and challenges as they arise.

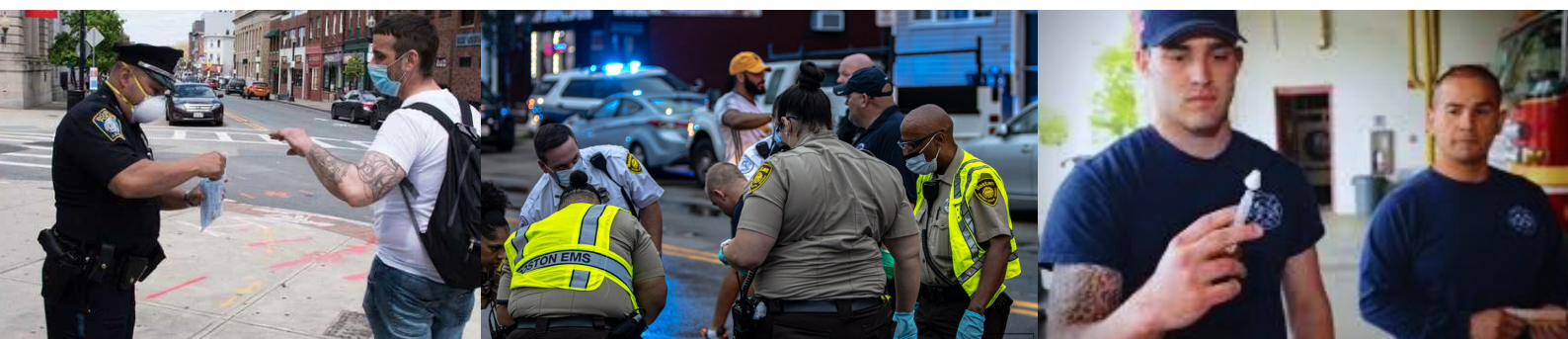
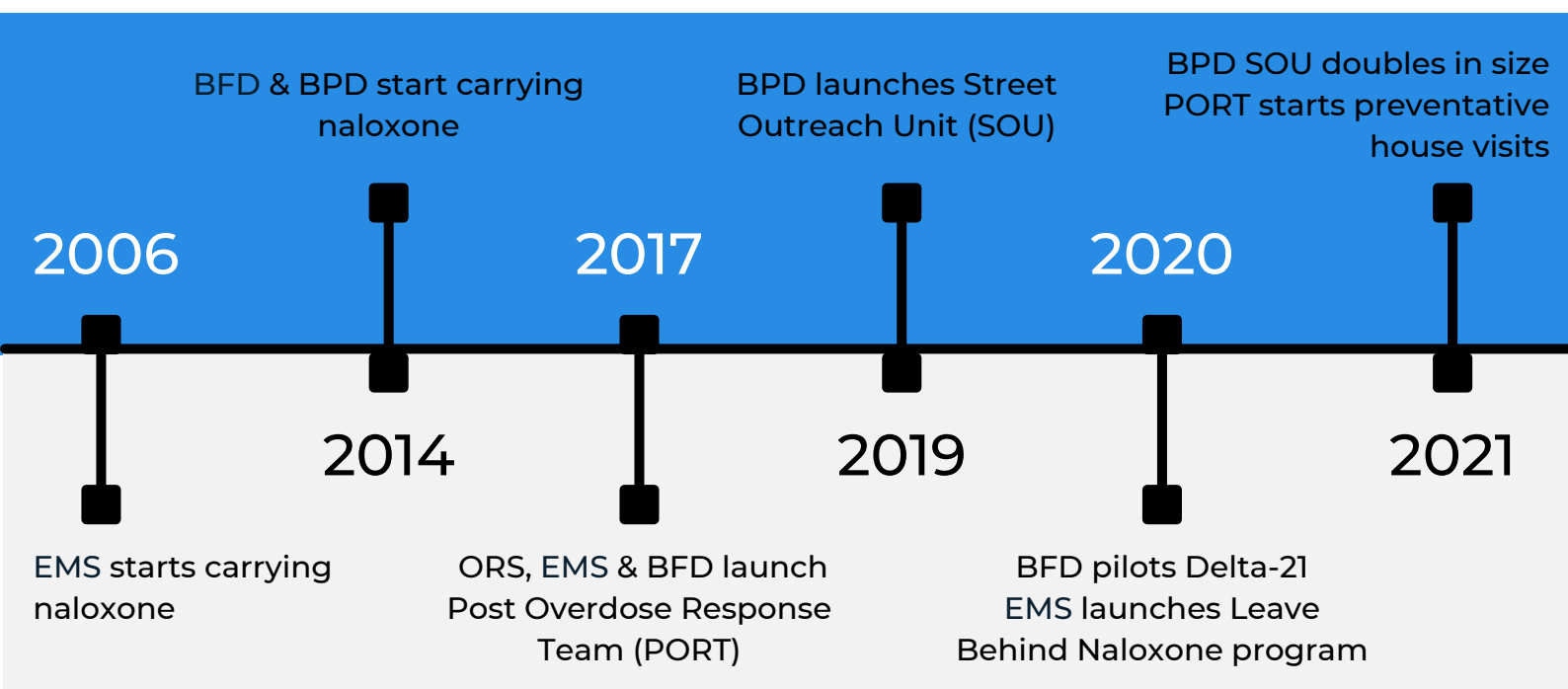
In partnership with the Greater Boston Faith Based Recovery Coalition and Gavin Foundation and supported through the Boston Resiliency Fund, ORS provided people entering sober homes with care packages containing bedding, personal hygiene products, a towel, and a gift card for other essential items. These care packages also went to people returning from incarceration through a partnership between Office of Returning Citizens, Probation Dept. and local sober homes. All care packages also included information on how to access the City's recovery and re-entry services.



Strategic Coordination

Expanding First Responder Efforts

Recovery Services work across City departments and with community partners to create a coordinated citywide recovery strategy and reduce stigma. This includes working with first responders to better engage with people with active substance use disorders. Over the last year, first responders amplified their efforts of reducing drug related harms by carrying and distributing Narcan, increasing diversion efforts, making more referrals to care, and working strategically with ORS to coordinate efforts.



Enhancing Recovery Supports

Mattapan Campus

The Mattapan Campus consists of three types of 24/7 residential care:

Transitions

A 30-day co-ed post
detox treatment
program

Wyman Recovery Home

A 4-6-month
residential recovery
program for individuals
identifying as men

Entre Familia

A family residential
treatment program
for pregnant and
postpartum women
and their children

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Office of Recovery Services worked closely with other City departments, and partner organizations to rapidly scale up additional medical, quarantine, and isolation space across the City, Mattapan being one of them.

The Office implemented increased screening, increased staffing, and other programmatic changes across all programs to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission among clients and staff. At the Mattapan Recovery Campus, entirely new policy and set of practices were created and implemented.

To ensure safety of all clients and staff, totaling over 700 individuals over the course of FY 21, the Campus implemented:

- Weekly Covid-19 Testing
- Mandatory Covid-19 Surveillance Testing Biweekly for unvaccinated staff during high-transmission periods
- Mandatory Covid-19 Surveillance Testing for unvaccinated staff during low-transmission periods
- Vaccine Clinics

R.E.N.E.W.

Release, Engage, Network, Employ, and Win



R.E.N.E.W. is a collaborative program that provides supported employment to individuals returning from incarceration, providing wrap-around supports to help them achieve recovery from substance use, find stable employment, and reunite with their families. There were 6 new graduates of the program in FY 21.

RENEW is run through a partnership between the Office of Recovery Services, the Federal Probation Department, Boston's Office of Returning Citizens and community partners such as the Gavin Foundation and Phoenix Multisport.

Making the Best of a Virtual World

Wellness Panel Series

ORS launched its first-ever panel series: *Wellness in Recovery*. This three-part series took place over Summer 2021, focusing on three distinct areas that support a person's recovery journey – Mind, Body and Spirit. Recovery is a holistic process and wellness in multiple capacities is part of the life-long journey.

Each session, three panelists who were experts in their fields and champions for wellness presented on how their organization promotes recovery, shared various resources available in Boston, and recommended everyday practices to achieve and maintain wellness.

A poster for the 'Wellness in Recovery' Summer Panel Series. The background is dark blue with a geometric pattern of light blue and grey chevrons. The title 'WELLNESS IN RECOVERY' is in large, bold, white capital letters. Below it, 'A Summer Panel Series' is in a smaller, blue font. The text 'PLEASE JOIN RECOVERY SERVICES FOR THREE PANEL DISCUSSIONS. LEARN ABOUT RESOURCES, STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES FOR PROMOTING WELLNESS IN RECOVERY.' is in white. A red line separates this from the registration information. The registration details are in white and red: 'TO PRE-REGISTER, PLEASE CLICK ON EACH OF THE PANEL TITLES BELOW: MIND: JUNE 10, 2021 3:00PM - 4:30PM EST BODY: JULY 8, 2021 3:00PM - 4:30PM EST SPIRIT: AUGUST 12, 2021 3:00PM - 4:30PM EST'. A small note at the bottom says '*INTENDED FOR PROVIDERS AND INDIVIDUALS IN RECOVERY*'. The Boston Recovery Services logo (a white 'B' on a blue square) is at the bottom left, and a white icon of a person with an upward arrow is at the bottom right. The text 'FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT WWW.BOSTON.GOV/RECOVERY' is in the center bottom.

WELLNESS IN RECOVERY

A Summer Panel Series

PLEASE JOIN RECOVERY SERVICES FOR THREE PANEL DISCUSSIONS. LEARN ABOUT RESOURCES, STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES FOR PROMOTING WELLNESS IN RECOVERY.

TO PRE-REGISTER, PLEASE CLICK ON EACH OF THE PANEL TITLES BELOW:

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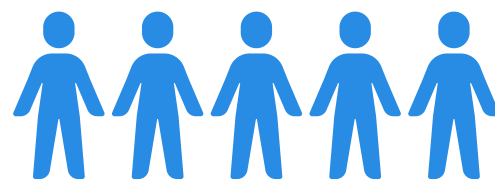
Adapting Prevention

Youth Program Spotlight

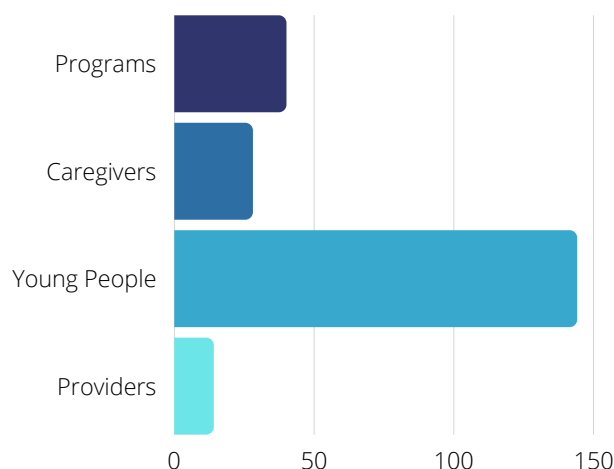
The [Boston Youth Resiliency & Recovery Collaborative \(BYRRC\)](#) is funded under the FY19 Opioid Affected Youth Initiative through the United States Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention.

The goal of this program is to support Boston youth and families affected by the opioid crisis and substance use broadly through the creation and implementation of a citywide, data-driven, cross-sector collaborative plan to catalyze positive community and systems change.

This program is a collaboration between the Division of Violence Prevention's Capacity Building and Training Initiative, and the Recovery Services Youth Prevention Program. In FY 21, BYRRC saw great success.



Trained five youth in focus group facilitations.



Engagement through online surveys, focus groups, and key informant interviews.

BYRRC's Goals

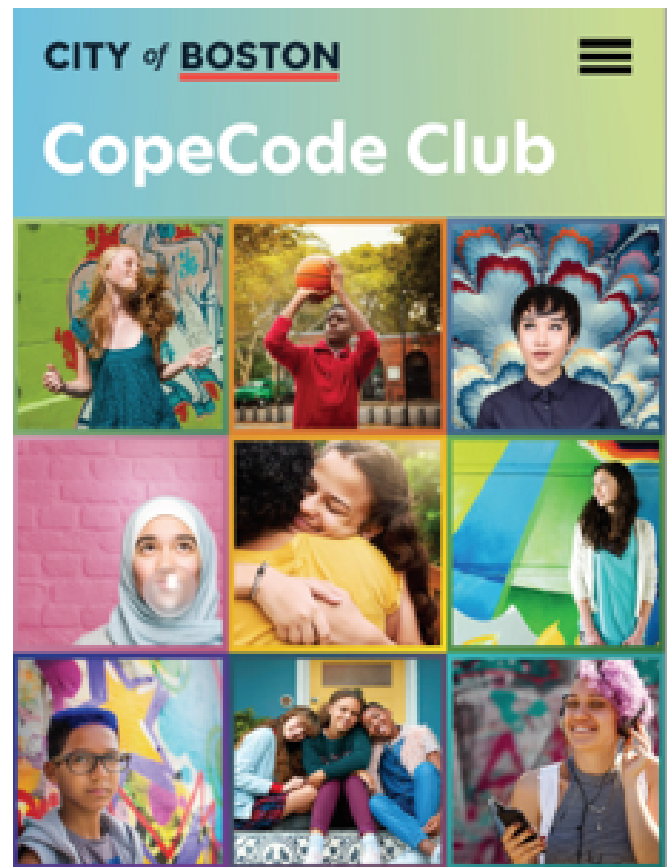
- 1) Strengthen Mental and Behavioral Health Services
- 2) Promote Youth Leadership and Education
- 3) Enhance Cross-Sector Collaboration

A Campaign that Withstands COVID

CopeCode Club is a Youth Prevention campaign that supports Boston youth in identifying healthy ways to cope with difficult feelings. These include stress, anger, and self-esteem. This campaign includes:

- stories from a youth perspective
- an activity kit for interactive engagement, and
- a social media challenge for virtual fun!

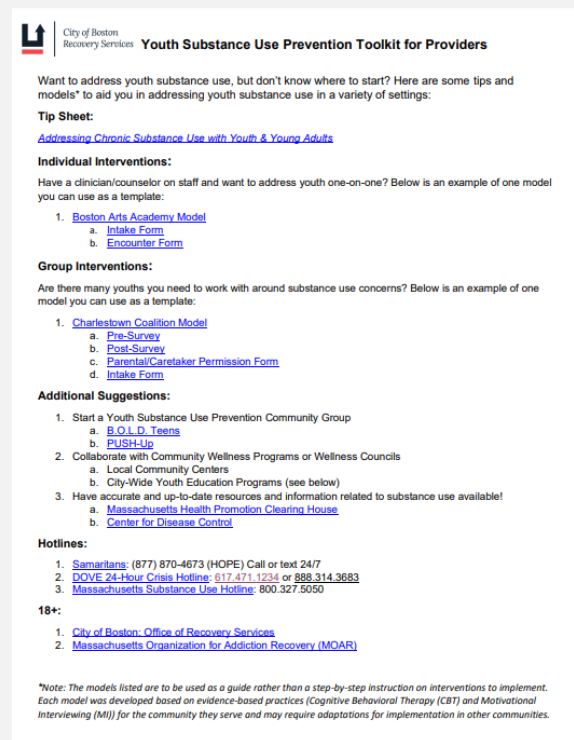
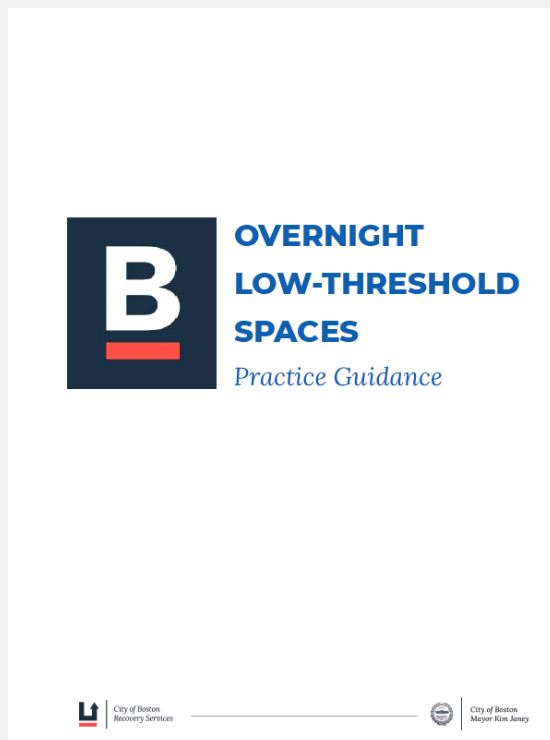
In response to COVID-19, the campaign shifted to a virtual format to meet youth in ways that are most beneficial to them, mainly over social media.



To learn more about Stress Science and a set of nine different activities that you can integrate into your every day life to cope with feelings of stress and anxiety, check out the CopeCode Club [website](#) and Instagram [page](#).



*Materials are available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin Chinese, Haitian Creole, & Portuguese.



Key Publications

Overnight Low-Threshold Practice Guidance

The Overnight Low-Threshold Practice Guidance was released in April 2021. This guidance provides an overview of low-threshold overnight care, giving agencies interested in providing these services an inside look into best practices.

Youth Substance Use Prevention Toolkit

The Youth Substance Use Prevention Toolkit was released in June 2021. This toolkit provides tips and models to aid providers in addressing youth substance use in a variety of settings.

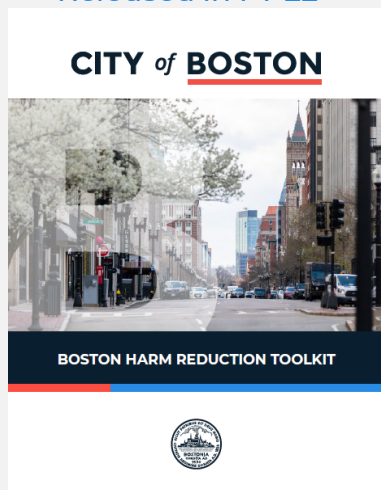
Looking Forward

Goals for FY 22

As ORS starts the new fiscal year, the Recovery Services team reflects on the successes and challenges of FY 21, looking forward to a new year, and to creating more innovative solutions to best serve the residents of Boston.

Harm Reduction Toolkit

Released in FY 22



New Engagement Center

To open Fall 2021



Expand Low-Threshold Housing

Using the funding released by the State, the City will work to increase housing options by creating low-threshold housing options throughout City.

Expand Services on the Street

Using the success of the FY 21 street team model, we plan to expand these efforts, creating more access to services on the street level.